I’m from Kansas: I know you are, but what am I?

“Highly inefficient, if not immoral.” That is a phrase that brings to mind many different kinds of bad behavior and debauchery. From Lamar Odom’s weekend in Vegas to the Ram’s moving to Los Angeles my mind runs wild. My mind does NOT turn to the decisions made by Kansas school board members on behalf of our students. Reasonable minds might differ on what is inefficient, but moral judgments reach a higher level and should not be made lightly.

A dictionary definition of the word leaves out the emotion, simply stating, “relating to what is right and wrong in human behavior.” In popular usage, the word is emotion and value-laden. Great minds have written broadly on the subject of moral behavior. In practice, it is an emotion-laden term that gets personal fast.

The first draft of this blog, which was written Wednesday morning after the State of the State Speech, was pretty snarky. When the speech forwarded the idea that school board members make immoral decisions it did not sit well with me. My first reaction was a lengthy diatribe that upon further review could be summed up with what my sister used to say to me, “I know you are, but what am I.”

It’s a great way to aggravate your younger brother, but it doesn’t really advance the discussion. Being more mature, when my grandmother had to intervene in these nanny, nanny, boo boo fights, we had to sit down for what she called “devotionals.”

For a ten-year-old boy on a farm with horses to ride, creeks to dam, forts to build, and kittens to catch, this was worse punishment than a beating from Adrian Peterson.

So my sister and I would be forced to read and discuss Mathew 5:39 “whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him as well” or Thessalonians 5:15 “Make sure that nobody pays back wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.” At the time, I was seething and didn’t much care for the message, kind of like I was Wednesday morning. But this morning when I was out for a morning run the words came back to me. I will take my grandma’s advice and not my 10-year-old self’s.

The business of educating Kansas students is too important for pettiness, name-calling, and snark. Sure it is fun, but it doesn’t advance the cause of education in Kansas. So let’s knock it off. Thanks to the Kansas State Board of Education, we have a new vision for Kansas education. Now we have to decide what we want from our schools, and how we pay for it. Can we focus on that instead of making policy by anecdote and trying to find problems for ready-made solutions? The Kansas State Board did it; can school leaders and the leaders in Topeka do it?

The day of the state of the state speech, an alliance of The United School Administrators, Kansas School Superintendents Association, Kansas National Education Association, and Kansas Association of School Boards issued a statement asking for a partnership with the Governor and Legislature to improve Kansas public education. <http://www.kasb.org/wcm/_NB/16/NB0112b.aspx> Let’s cut the political rhetoric and focus on what Kansas students need from their schools and how to pay for it.

(For an analysis of the 65 percent idea, please check out Ted Carter’s Blog http://kasbresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/the-myth-of-65.html)

Get the facts: Reports before the Legislature

Several reports have been completed for the Kansas Legislature in recent weeks; reports that could have a big impact on public schools. Here is a list of some of those and where you can find them on the Internet.

► Report of the Special Committee on K-12 Student Success: www.kslgregearchearch.org/KLRD-web/Publications/CommitteeReports/2015CommitteeReports/spc_k-12_student_success-cr.pdf

► KASB Summary and Analysis of the Alvarez & Marsal State Efficiency Study: www.kasb.org/assets/Advocacy/16/AMStudyKASBAnalysis.pdf


► The governor’s budget reports are available here http://budget.ks.gov/gbr.htm
Bills, reports filed that may impact schools

The first two weeks of the legislation session have produced several bills calling for dramatic changes to K-12 education and a couple of reports with numerous recommendations that would affect public schools.

First to the bills. House Bill 2504 by state Rep. John Bradford, R-Lansing, would require every county with 10,000 or fewer students to be a single district and in counties with more than 10,000 students, the districts would have to have more than 1,500 students. The bill has been assigned to the House Education Committee, but no hearing has been set yet.

Also in the House Education Committee is HB 2486, which would establish a legislative bond review board that would determine what percentage of a proposed project would be eligible for state aid. This was one of the recommendations of the interim committee on K-12 Student Success.

That K-12 report also recommended overhauling the way funding is calculated for at-risk students, providing funds for each student to take the ACT, setting up a test that is aligned with the Rose capacities and is independent of the state and federal education departments, and requiring annual audits of school districts.

Key legislators have said the report’s recommendations will be studied throughout the session and may be part of any school finance plan that would replace the temporary block grant system.

Gov. Sam Brownback called for a merit pay plan but during an informational hearing his representative said the governor didn’t have a specific proposal.

Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach had introduced legislation that would limit what local governmental entities, including school boards, could distribute to the public as far as information about bonds and other questions submitted to voters.

Senate Bill 323 would require suicide prevention training for school district personnel and was being considered by the Senate Education Committee.

In addition to the K-12 report, the Legislature has received the cost efficiency study from the Alvarez & Marsal consulting group.

That report recommended consolidating health plans offered by school districts into a single plan similar to the State Employee Health Plan, reducing excess cash carryover balances, centralizing services and pooling insurance and procurement. Various committees are expected to dive deeper into these proposals.

The Legislature also is awaiting the monthly revenue report for January. Revenue from December fell $35.2 million below lowered revenue projections, and state officials have voiced concern about weak sales tax revenue.

Continued revenue problems could force changes in Brownback’s proposed budget, which allowed for extremely slim margins of error. Since Brownback and legislative leaders have said no to any more tax increases that could mean cuts are a possibility.

As it stands now, Brownback’s budget plan doesn’t cut the level of school block grants for operating funds that were approved last year.
The myth of 65 percent

During his January 12th during State of the State address, Governor Sam Brownback stated the following:

Teachers need money to care for their needs. That’s why Kansans invest in education: so good teachers are able to do their calling and teach. Yet today, of the more than $4 billion the state puts into education funding, not nearly enough goes toward instruction. That’s highly inefficient, if not immoral, denying Kansans from putting their education dollars where they want it…behind a good teacher. I call on the legislature to design a new education funding system that puts more of our money into instruction.

Brownback is referring to the Kansas law dealing with having at least 65 percent of spending go towards the classroom rather than administrative expenses. Anyone following Kansas education over the past several years has no doubt heard about the 65 percent law, but it’s likely that many have not seen the actual language in the law. Here it is:

K.S.A. 72-64c01. Sixty-five percent of moneys to be spent on instruction. (a) It is the public policy goal of the state of Kansas that at least 65 percent of the moneys appropriated, distributed or otherwise provided by the state to school districts shall be expended in the classroom or for instruction.

This does not mean that each district is expected to spend 65 percent of their revenue “in the classroom.” As Mark Tallman notes in a recent blog linked above, “Contrary to some claims, there is no legal requirement that each Kansas school district must spend 65 percent of its budget on instruction.” The language of the law describes the 65 percent as “a public policy goal,” and only asserts that for the state as a whole, 65 percent of money going to education should be spent “in the classroom.” But what does spending “in the classroom” really mean?

Looking at federally reported data from NCES, I find the following categories:

- Salaries
- Employee Benefits
- Purchased Services
- Supplies
- Tuition and Other
- Support Services
  - Student Support
  - Instructional Staff
  - General Administration
- School Administration
- Operation and Maintenance
- Student Transportation
- Other Support Services
  - Food Services
  - Capital Outlay
- Interest on School Debt

Typically, using this data, most would take “Expenditures for Instruction” as synonymous with “Spending in the Classroom” and divide it by “Total Revenue” to see the percent spent on the classroom. Doing this for Kansas from 2011-12, you come up with 51.07 percent. This looks bad for Kansas until you realize that the range of percents for the states is from 46.56 percent to 62.07 percent, and the U.S. average is 53.45 percent. So if we assume that “Spending on Instruction” in the federal definition is the same as “Spending in the Classroom” in Kansas law, we can assert that Kansas is not meeting this goal, but neither is any state in the country.

Instead, let’s re-organize the NCES categories to fit into two categories; “In the Classroom” and “Outside the Classroom,” as shown in the table below:

Now, we have 59 percent in the classroom instead of 51 percent, but it’s still not 65 percent. Many say that the money not spent in the classroom is wasted on exorbitant administrator salaries and unnecessary overhead. Looking at the table below, however, you see that only 2.5 percent of the funds goes to district-administration, and just under 5 percent goes to school-level administration. Is it abusing your budget to spend 7.5 percent on administrative costs?

What about the other 35 percent or so?

About 20 percent goes towards facilities (Operations and Maintenance and Capital Outlay), under 4 percent goes towards debt, 7.5 percent goes to transportation and food service, and the remainder goes to tuition and other support services. Is spending one-fifth of your budget on facilities unreasonable? Is spending the same amount on food and transportation as you do on administration immoral? Can you say that these costs don’t support classroom instruction and are not necessary?

For more information, see the full blog post at kasbresearch.wordpress.com.

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the Classroom</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>3,345,758.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee Benefits</td>
<td>2,082,097.74</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
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<td>Supplies</td>
<td>632,726.25</td>
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<td>Student Support</td>
<td>138,981.08</td>
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<td>Instructional Staff Support Services</td>
<td>288,452.95</td>
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<td>Instructional Staff Support Services</td>
<td>203,500.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside the Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchased Services</td>
<td>84,449.35</td>
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<td>Tuition and Other</td>
<td>21,970.61</td>
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<td>General Administration</td>
<td>144,033.25</td>
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<td>School Administration</td>
<td>280,207.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation and Maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Transportation</td>
<td>191,668.44</td>
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<td>Other Support Services</td>
<td>116,585.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Services</td>
<td>230,699.72</td>
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<td>Capital Outlay</td>
<td>682,545.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest on School Debt</td>
<td>201,522.26</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
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KASB Board hears results of NSBA program audit, staff reports

Members of the KASB Board of Directors gathered in Topeka on Jan. 20 for an afternoon meeting of reports and discussions.

Following the approval of routine business, the board received a report from Angie Stallbaumer, KASB attorney and policy specialist. Stallbaumer gave an overview of the KASB Policy Services and the work done by legal staff on board policy, handbooks, staff directives, superintendent evaluation, goal setting and negotiated agreements.

Brian Farmer and Betsy Miller-Jones, two members of the NSBA team who visited KASB last Fall for a program audit, presented the results of the audit. Farmer is the executive director of the Wyoming School Board Association, and Betsy-Miller-Jones (joining the meeting via Skype), is executive director of the Oregon School Boards Association.

Don Shimkus, president, gave a progress report on the recent meetings of leaders from KASB, KNEA, USA Kansas, KSDE and KSSA. The group is called the Kansas Alliance for Education Advocacy.

Betty Arnold, Region 14 vice-president, Wichita USD 259, and Sarah Loquist, attorney, presented a summary of the report from the ESI (Emergency Safety Interventions) Task Force they both served on last Fall.

KASB staff reports included budget information from John Heim, executive director, and Randy Weseman, assistant executive director for operations. Weseman outlined internal processes for staff purchase requisitions and staff credit card reports. Rod Spangler, assistant executive director for insurance services, gave an update on changes and expansions planned for KASB’s Student Accident Insurance program. Andrea Hartzell, communications specialist, reviewed evaluations from the 2015 KASB Annual Conference and noted that in two years KASB will hold its 100th annual meeting. The 2016 and 2017 annual conferences will both be in Wichita.

Mark Tallman, associate executive director for communications and advocacy, updated the board on the start of the 2016 Legislative Session and various advocacy activities.

Donna Whiteman, assistant executive director for legal services, reviewed the fiduciary duties of KASB Board Members.

The board approved a change to KASB Policy BBJ-Reimbursement of Officers and Directors, waiving the annual conference registration fee for regional vice-presidents. The policy already provides free attendance at KASB seminars and workshops for regional vice-presidents.

The board formed two study committees:

1. Explore implications of the change in election cycles for local boards of education. The committee will include Betty Arnold, Region 14 vice-president, Wichita USD 259; Rod Stewart, past president, Washington County USD 108; and Amy Martin, president-elect, Olathe USD 233.

2. Explore and develop recommendations for changing the process used to elect regional vice-presidents. Committee members will be Kevin Schasteen, Region 2 vice-president, Paola USD 368; Evelyn Hill, Region 13 vice-president, Kansas City Kansas USD 500; and Gina McGowan, Region 7 vice-president, Ellsworth USD 327.

The next board of directors meeting will be held in Oxford, Kansas. The date and time to be determined. ~Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

Westar Energy has two scholarship opportunities with deadlines fast approaching

Community scholarship opportunities:
Scholarship deadline is February 15, 2016.

A minimum of 12 community scholarships will be awarded annually to 12 Kansas high school graduates. For information about community scholarships, students should visit with their high school guidance counselor.

Craft and plant scholarship opportunities:
Scholarship deadline is March 15, 2016.

Craft and plant scholarships are available for individuals who wish to pursue an associate degree in electric power and distribution, power plant technology, industrial technology or other industry-related degrees in Kansas.

Go to www.westarenergy.com/scholarship-opportunities for additional information and application forms.

Contact KASB’s Randy Weseman, Assistant Executive Director for Operations 785-273-3600 800-432-2471

KASB’s Prestigious Partner - Piper Jaffray - brings expertise and experience to K-12 school district financing, and is ready to deliver innovative financing solutions to KASB Members!

• Project Financing
• Financial Advisory Services
• Investment of bond Proceeds
• Refunding Feasibility Reports

Piper Jaffray
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>KASB BoardDocs Webinar</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Riley County USD 378 Supt Search Application Deadline</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Concordia USD 333 &amp; Wellington USD 353 Supt Search Application Deadline</td>
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<td>9-10</td>
<td>Kansas State Board of Education Meeting</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Negotiations Workshop - Salina</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Negotiations Workshop - Hays</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Cimmarron-Ensign USD 102 Supt Search Application Deadline</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Negotiations Workshop - Greenbush</td>
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<td>Negotiations Workshop - Hays</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Washington County USD 108 Supt Search Application Deadline</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>CheylinUSD103SuptSearchApplicationDeadline</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Clerks-Treasurers Workshop - Topeka</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Greeley County USD 200 &amp; Little River USD 444 Supt Search Application Deadline</td>
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**February 2016**

**KASB Insurance & KJUMP**

785-273-3600     800-432-2471

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